

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



2008 ANNUAL REPORT

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL



Division of Rehabilitation Services

Tennessee Department of Human Services

Annual SRC Chairperson's Report

Honorable Governor Phil Bredesen and Dr. Ed Anthony, Acting Commissioner, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA):

On behalf of the Tennessee State Rehabilitation Council, it is my pleasure to present to you our 2008 Annual Report on the status of the vocational rehabilitation program in our state. This year the council was again very active in providing guidance to the vocational rehabilitation program in the state of Tennessee:

- The council conducted four quarterly meetings, which allowed the council to come together and share information with vocational rehabilitation on how to best deliver services to Tennesseans with disabilities;
- We continued to be active nationally, by sending representatives to the two national conferences of the SRC-NCSAB, which held their meeting in November and April. At the April meeting we had the opportunity to meet with Senators Alexander and Corker along with congressman Bart Gordon in person to thank them and remind them of the importance of supporting services that allow Tennesseans an opportunity to work, which is the goal of vocational rehabilitation;
- The council has presented to Vocational Rehabilitation a resource plan, that will allow the council to operate efficiently being able to meet its federal and state mandate;
- We had our third annual retreat, this time jointly with the State Rehabilitation Training Center board, this allowed us to collaborate and learn how each other works to better serve Tennesseans with disabilities;
- We appreciate the timely appointments that your office has made, it allows us the opportunity to represent the entire state appropriately while considering state rehabilitation issues;
- This will be my last report as chair, and I want to tell you along with Vocational Rehabilitation what an honor has been to serve as chair of this council. I think the council is on very solid footing, and has an opportunity to impact the life of many Tennesseans with disabilities.

Respectfully submitted by,



John L. Harris

In behalf of the State Rehabilitation Council

SRC-Chairperson

Director of Disabled Student Services

Middle Tennessee State University

Murfreesboro, TN 37132

Message from Assistant Commissioner

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) continues to foster an organizational culture change whereby our work and daily activities are guided by the core values of our agency. Those values support the following vision for our vocational rehabilitation program:

To enhance the development of a diverse workforce so that individuals with disabilities can achieve and maintain meaningful careers.

This year, our vision has led us to serve more clients despite significant state budget shortfalls and skyrocketing costs of services. We have continued aggressively to reduce our waiting list during a year when other states saw reductions in the numbers they were able to serve. We released an additional 3,911 clients in priority category 2 from our waiting list so that, as of September 30, 2008, only 4,888 clients remained. Of this number, only 2,138 clients remained in priority category 2, and those clients applied for services on or after January 1, 2007. The ability to serve clients has not been without costs. The Division participated in a statewide voluntary buyout program, which resulted in the reduction of 30 positions (1 program manager, 2 program coordinators, and 27 administrative support positions).

In addition to reduction of the waiting list, review of inactive cases took top priority in the Division this year. Staff formed statewide teams to revisit cases that had been inactive for an extensive period of time. Because of this targeted review, we closed 11,503 inactive cases, allowing counselors to devote more individualized attention to smaller caseloads. The Division's leadership also further has encouraged counselors to enhance individualized, top-quality service to clients by guiding the development of a counselor recognition scorecard that balances production measurement with qualitative elements of outstanding client service such as creativity in plan development, effective use of resources, team work and outreach activities.

Individualized client service also requires a policy manual that allows for maximum problem solving and creativity in client service. The Division has partnered with the SRC to assign a policy review committee to simplify the Vocational Rehabilitation Policy Manual. The committee completed a draft that should be ready for public review in early 2009.

The Division has continued its efforts in its Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). A staff development specialist is actively engaged in recruiting graduates from Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC) and related programs across the state. During the past year, 12 existing staff completed their Master's Degrees. With the Division's support, the University of Tennessee-Knoxville received an educational grant from RSA to begin a new online MRC program. Currently, the Division has 29 staff enrolled in MRC programs through the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, University of Kentucky, University of Wisconsin-Stout and Auburn University. Federal scholarships and stipends have been accessed to offset costs

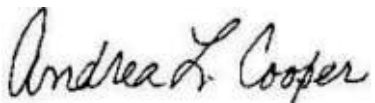
whenever possible. However, the Division is fully funding two employees at the University of Tennessee and partially funding 4 employees at the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

On June 30, 2008, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) ceased to fund Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Programs (RRCEP) across the nation in favor of forming TACE (Technical Assistance and Continuing Education) centers. The Southeast Region TACE Center was awarded to Burton Blatt Institute of Syracuse University in conjunction with DBTAC: Southeast ADA Center. This TACE center is currently working to establish partnerships with the eight states it will be serving. They are also in the process of assessing training needs for the aforementioned states with future plans to provide web-based training activities. The Division likewise is exploring web-based training programs for statewide training activities. With current budget issues, web-based training would not only minimize staff time away from job duties but also significantly reduce travel costs.

Finally, the Division continues its process of procuring an electronic case management system. The business requirements have been developed, and the procurement documents are undergoing a final internal review with an anticipated release of early 2009. The launch date for the new system is still targeted for October 1, 2009.

We are grateful to the State Rehabilitation Council for its role in providing guidance on priorities and serving as the public voice for our program. We appreciate the great efforts that the SRC has made to learn about the challenges that our Division faces and to partner with us in developing solutions to the challenges. I look forward to an ongoing partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council as the Council continues to provide valuable feedback on customer satisfaction, goals and priorities, policy changes and innovative ideas for improved client services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrea L. Cooper". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large initial 'A'.

Andrea Cooper
Assistant Commissioner
Division of Rehabilitation Services

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT 2007

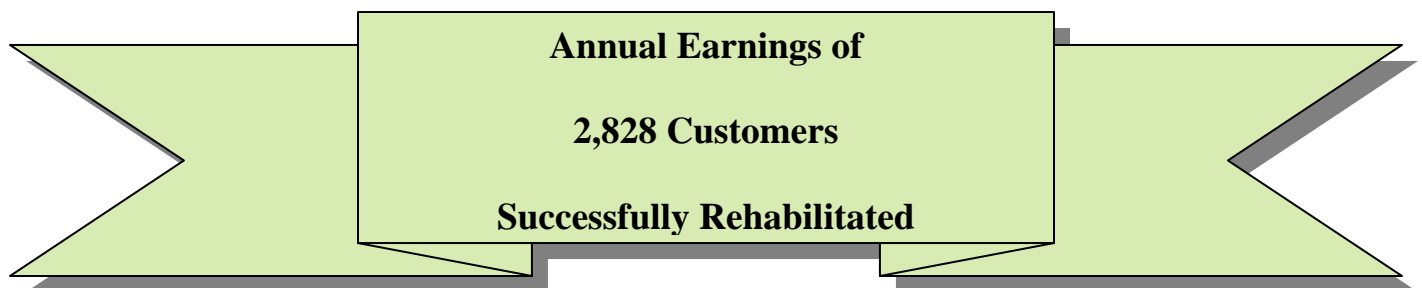
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PERFORMANCE STATISTICS FISCAL YEAR 2007

The State Rehabilitation Council and the Division of Rehabilitation Services are proud to report another outstanding year of serving and placing individuals with disabilities into employment. Below is a listing of statistics for the Federal Fiscal Year, October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007.

- **New applications taken by the Division..... 7,856**
- **# of persons with disabilities served 38,584**
- **# of persons with disabilities obtaining employment through the services provided..... 2,828**



Annualized Earnings Before Rehabilitation.....\$ 4,798,508

Annualized Earnings After Rehabilitation \$ 45,497,712

Net Earnings Increase \$ 40,699,204

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ❖ **The Division served 38,584 individuals with disabilities in FY 2007. Of those, 2,828 achieved successful outcomes (employment).**
- ❖ **Of the 2,828 successful outcomes, 2,617 (92.53%) were individuals with significant disabilities.**
- ❖ **Annualized earnings of the 2,828 individuals rehabilitated increased by nearly \$41 million dollars.**
- ❖ **The success rate achieved by the Division was 62.96 %.**
- ❖ **The Division achieved a 96.6 % satisfaction rating as reported by the Consumer Satisfaction Surveys for FY 2007.**
- ❖ **The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), as required by the Rehabilitation Act, held all of its quarterly meetings. Council minutes are available upon request and in alternative formats.**
- ❖ **The Division, through its Tennessee Business Enterprise (TBE) Program, operates 150 vending facilities. They generated over \$20 million in sales and produced an average net income per blind vendor that exceeded \$46,842.**

GOALS & PRIORITIES

FOR

FISCAL YEAR 2008

The goals and priorities of the Division of Rehabilitation Services for Fiscal Year 2009, as developed and agreed to by the Division of Rehabilitation Services staff and the State Rehabilitation Council, are:

1. Streamline focus of the Division of Rehabilitation Services for client-centered, effective, successful service.
 - a. Provide services to approximately 31,000 individuals. Services include information and referral for individuals on the waiting list in a closed priority category. As of 8/31/2008, there were 5,172 eligible individuals on the waiting list in closed priority categories.
 - b. Achieve successful outcomes for at least 2,907 individuals with disabilities. Successful outcome means suitable employment that continues for a minimum of 90 days. (While the Division will continue to strive for the highest number of successful outcomes possible, it has set this minimum goal in accordance with 34 CFR 361.84(c)(1)(i) Performance Indicator 1.1.)
 - c. At least 96% of individuals served and closed with successful employment outcomes will be individuals with significant disabilities.
 - d. The success rate for individuals determined eligible and receiving services will be at least 65%. Success rate is determined by the number of Status 26 (Rehabilitated Cases) divided by the number of Status 26 plus the number of Status 28 (Non-Rehabilitated Cases).
 - e. Achieve a 96% or higher satisfaction rating for the vocational rehabilitation program as reported by the consumer satisfaction survey program for successful outcome closures.
 - f. Continue to promote and provide training to optimize the use of the client intake process to facilitate more counseling to include considerations such as healthcare, impact on SSA benefits, and economic needs through measures such as an improved application document. Counseling provided and referrals to other resources will be noted within the case file notes.
 - g. Continue to increase employment opportunities for clients through the following services, measured by an increased number of clients entering employment after receiving those services:

- i. Supported employment
- ii. Job coaches
- iii. Appropriate self employment

2. Develop staff motivation and skills to deliver client-centered counseling.

- a. Continue our emphasis on client-centered values and services.
- b. Continue to support and encourage counselors seeking master's degrees in rehabilitation counseling.
- c. Implement new core course training for all counseling staff not holding a master's degree.
- d. Increase training for counselors, evaluators and related vocational rehabilitation staff on how effective rehabilitation technology options lead to successful employment outcomes.

3. Reach out to stakeholders to build resources, reputation and results.

- a. Develop a marketing/outreach plan that:
 - i. targets and reaches unserved or underserved populations, such as Spanish speaking clients and clients with TBI, autism, deaf-blindness, and mental illness;
 - ii. targets individuals with disabilities who meet our Order of Selection open Priority Category 1 classification;
 - iii. targets SSA beneficiaries seeking employment; and
 - iv. clearly conveys the employment purpose of our services.
- b. Continue to encourage partnerships with transportation providers to expand options for clients to participate in vocational rehabilitation and to secure sustainable transportation for employment.
- c. Continue to improve communication and partnership among DRS and other state agencies, community resource providers, career centers, employers and disability service providers.
- d. Continue to work collaboratively with and provide greater technical assistance to the workforce investment programs including career centers.
- e. Continue to encourage partnerships with local school systems for specialized vocational rehabilitation counselors to serve Transition from School to Work clients.

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

MEMBERSHIP

WHO WE ARE

Under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, The State Rehabilitation Council is to be comprised of at least 15 individuals from the following representation(s):

*Statewide Independent Living Council;
Parent Training & Information Center;
Client Assistance Program;
VR Counselor (ex officio, non-voting member);
Community Rehabilitation Provider;
Four representatives from business, industry and labor;
Disability advocacy groups that include a cross section of individuals with physical, cognitive, sensory, and mental disabilities and representatives of individuals with disabilities who have difficulty representing themselves or who are unable, due to their disabilities, to represent themselves;
Current or former applicants for or recipients of vocational rehabilitation services;
State Department of Education, Division of Special Education;
Statewide Workforce Investment Board; and
Director of the designated state unit (ex-officio, non-voting member).*

** The majority of SRC members must be individuals with disabilities, and members are appointed by the Governor to serve no more than two consecutive full terms.*

SRC MEMBERS
FISCAL YEAR 2008

EAST REGION

Karen Harrison – Greeneville, TN
Parent Training and Information Center
Representative



Kim Williams – Soddy Daisy, TN
Business, Industry and Labor
Representative



Robert Rosenbaum – Knoxville, TN
Community Rehabilitation Program
Representative



MIDDLE REGION

**Andrea Cooper – Nashville, TN
Assistant Commissioner of DRS
Representative**



**Cindy Gardner – Nashville, TN
Client Assistant Program
Representative**



**Ann Hampton – Nashville, TN
State Education Agency
Representative**

No Picture

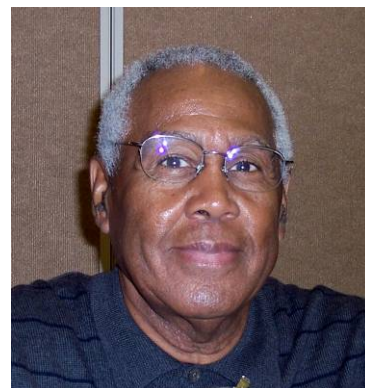
**Jan Bush – Columbia, TN
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
Representative**



**John Harris, SRC Chair – Murfreesboro, TN
Business, Industry and Labor
Representative**



**John Majors – Nashville, TN
Workforce Investment Board
Representative**



**Greta Gipson – Decherd, TN
Business, Industry and Labor
Representative**



**Maria Ramirez – Nashville, TN
Vocational Rehabilitation Recipient
Representative**



**Mark Montgomery – Nashville, TN
Statewide Independent Living Council
Representative**



**Merry Adams – Smyrna, TN
Disability Advocacy Group
Representative**



WEST REGION

**Ray Stevenson, SRC Vice-Chair – Martin, TN
Disability Advocacy Group
Representative**



**Lynda Crisp, SRC Secretary – Bolivar, TN
Vocational Rehabilitation Recipient
Representative**



**Lordy Smith – Memphis, TN
Business, Industry and Labor
Representative**



**Kevin Lofton – Memphis, TN
Disability Advocacy Group
Representative**



SUCCESS STORIES

Region 4, October through December

Brian has left sided hemi paresis, which could have become a major obstacle. He worked with the department chair at his university to arrange accommodations to enable him to complete his field experience, and he did research to make sure that there would be job opportunities in the field of geology for an individual with physical limitations. Early in his last semester, he started having seizures. He was emphatic that he was too close to success to quit. He saw a neurologist on a regular basis and got the seizures under control without ever missing a single class.

Brian now works as a geologist on a major dam project, where he supervises work crews and is able to perform the essential job functions. He exhibited some fears about ending his relationship with VR after he entered employment, but his counselor assured him that he could continue to contact her for guidance and counseling. As he began feeling more secure about his ability to handle things on his own, the contacts decreased. He credits VR and his counselor for the opportunity to have a successful career, and his counselor credits her clerical support, Regina Mackie, for her assistance. His counselor says that without Regina's work on these and other cases, none of them could work as smoothly as they do. This is an example of collaboration between the client and the VR team and is a wonderful model for rehabilitation at work.

Region 6, January through March

Cody assumed ownership of his IPE early on and remained an active participant in the rehabilitation process until achieving successful employment as Cost Analyst with Bridgestone America. The combined effort of DRS staff and the multiple support services needed for an individual with quadriplegia to be successful in employment were essential elements in his success. These collaborations included efforts of DRS counselors; the spinal cord injury staff at TRC Smyrna; TAC staff; and Corporate Connections.

Region 1, April through June

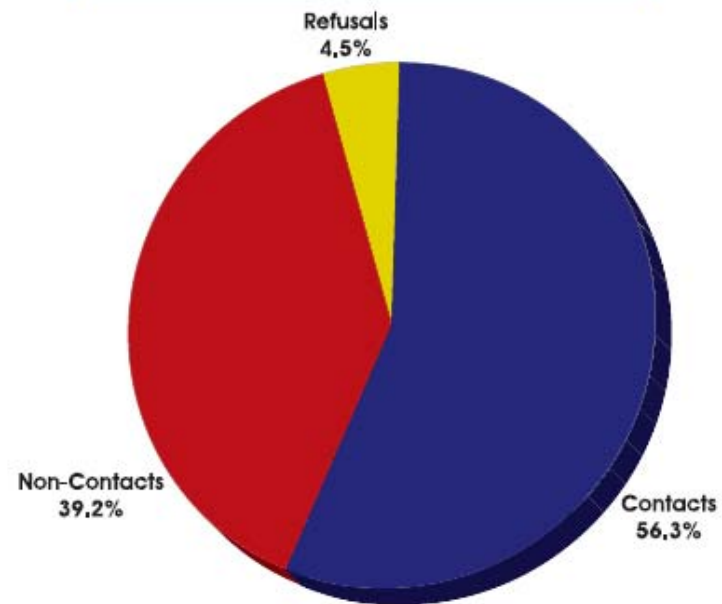
There were a number of reasons why the Staff Advisory Council (SAC) felt that this case best exemplifies what rehabilitation is all about. "Persistence" was the word most often used by the SAC when reading about the efforts Robert made to achieve his employment goals. Having experienced two separate accidents, he was left with significant impairments and even with substantial obstacles he encountered along the way, he didn't give up until his employment goal was met.

Throughout his college training experience, Robert received intensive counseling and guidance and later job placement activities provided by DRS. He is now successfully employed as a systems engineer with Watt's Bar Nuclear Power Plant. His involvement in student government, extra-curricular activities and honor societies perhaps prepared him for the additional employment duties as training coordinator for a majority of employees in his department at the power plant.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE
CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY
ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY**

**PREPARED BY
SPARKS BUREAU OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH
CENTER FOR MANPOWER STUDIES
THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS**

Contact Information

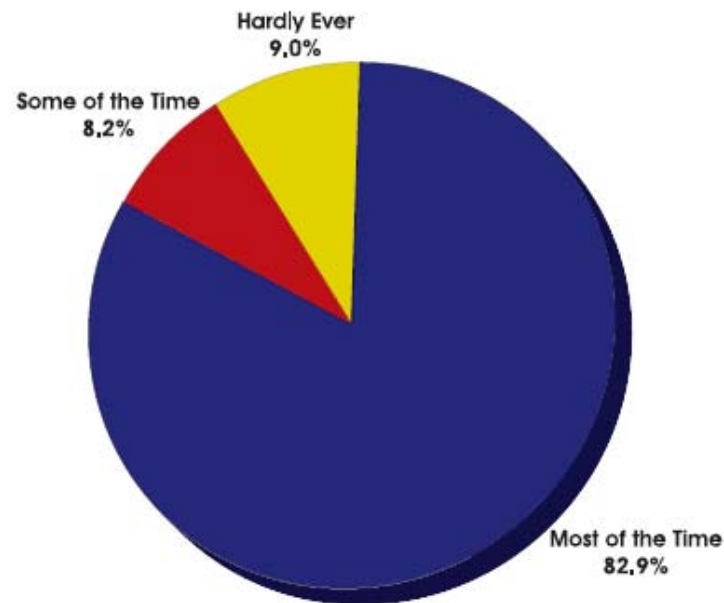


Number Who Responded	
Contacts	1,593
Refusals	128
Non-Contacts	1,108

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis, FY 2006-2007.



Did your counselor try to match your skills with the jobs available at the time?

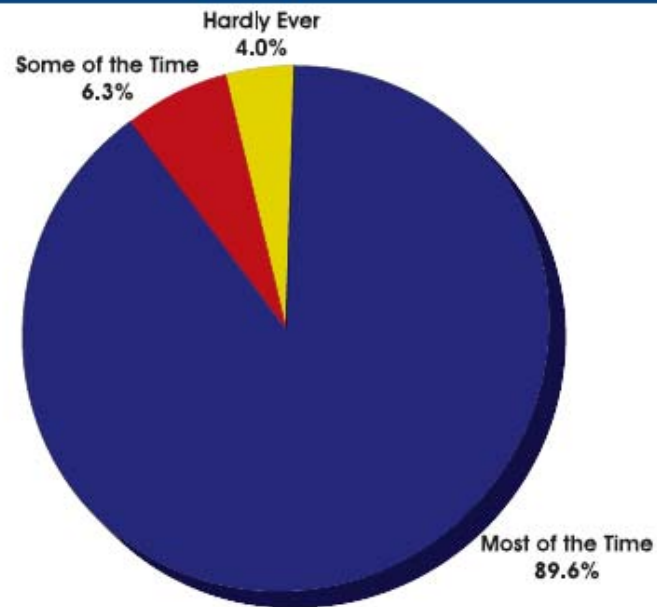


Responses	Number Who Responded
Most of the Time	1,276
Some of the Time	126
Hardly Ever	138

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis, FY 2006-2007.



Did your vocational rehabilitation counselor try to understand your problems and needs?

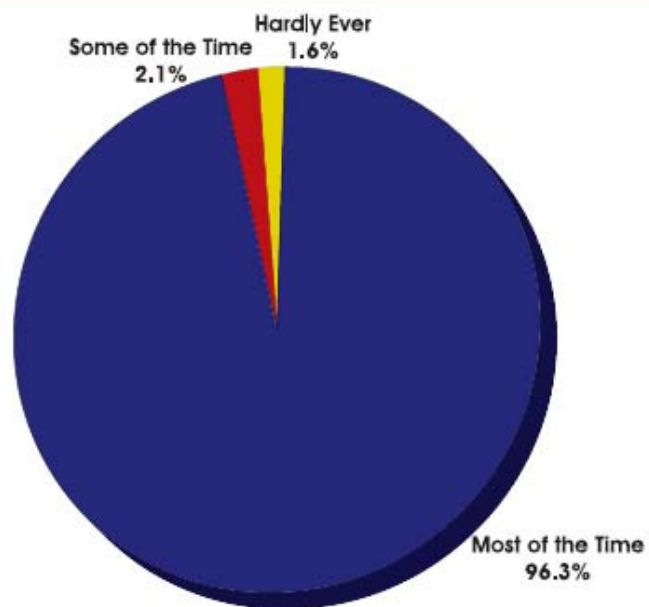


Responses	Number Who Responded
Most of the Time	1,417
Some of the Time	100
Hardly Ever	64

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis, FY 2006-2007.



Did the counselors and staff treat you with dignity and respect?

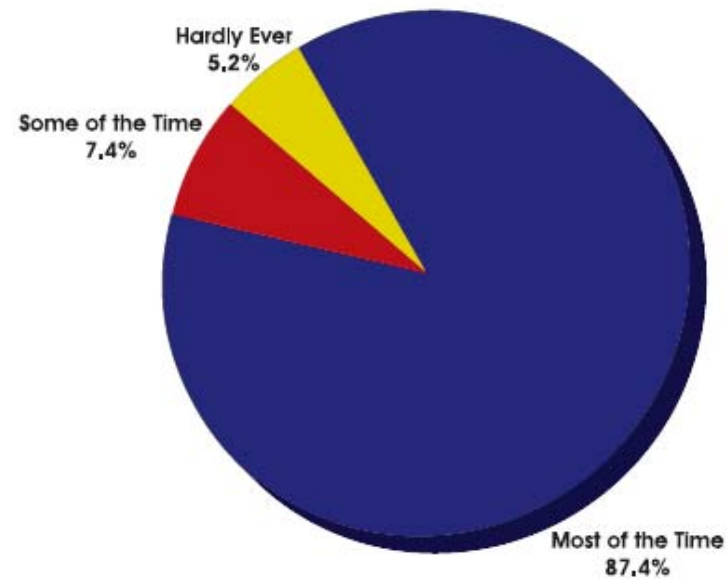


Responses	Number Who Responded
Most of the Time	1,528
Some of the Time	33
Hardly Ever	26

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis, FY 2006-2007.



Did the services you received through the program meet your needs?

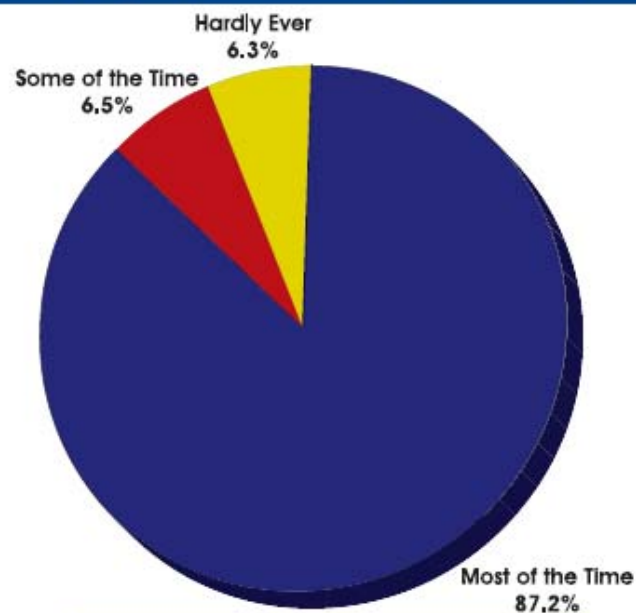


Responses	Number Who Responded
Most of the Time	1,386
Some of the Time	118
Hardly Ever	82

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis, FY 2006-2007.



Do you feel better about your employment future because of the services and training you received through vocational rehabilitation?

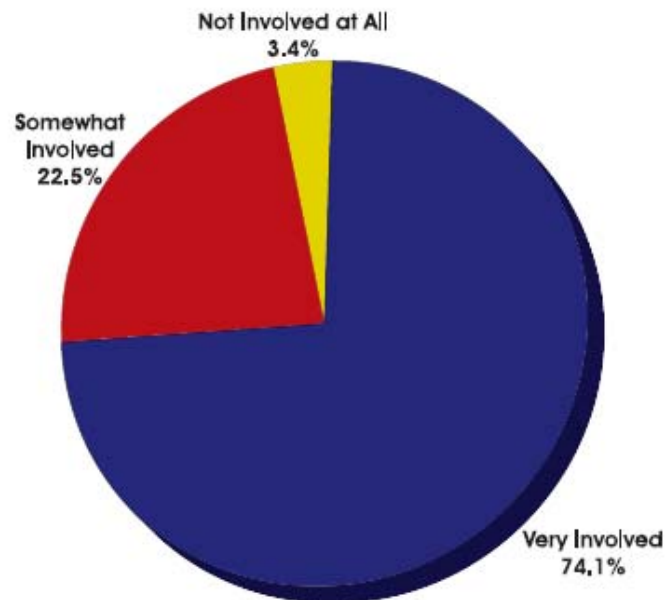


Responses	Number Who Responded
Most of the Time	1,378
Some of the Time	103
Hardly Ever	99

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis, FY 2006-2007.



How involved were you in developing your vocational goals?

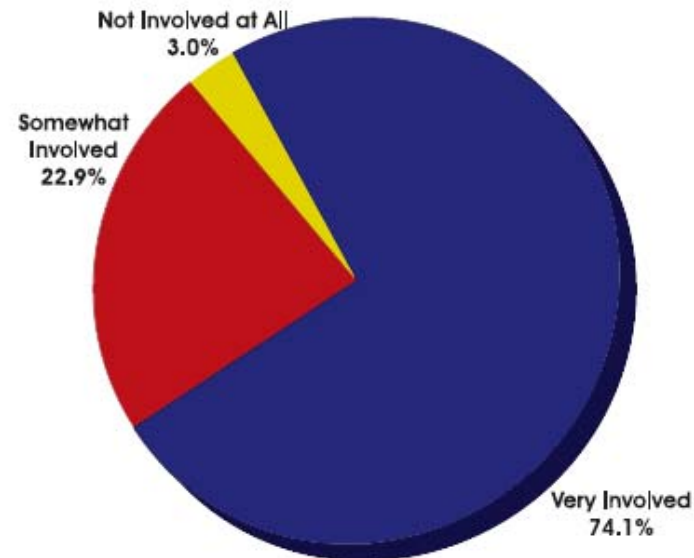


Responses	Number Who Responded
Very Involved	1,165
Somewhat Involved	353
Not Involved at All	54

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis, FY 2006-2007.



How involved were you in selecting your program services?

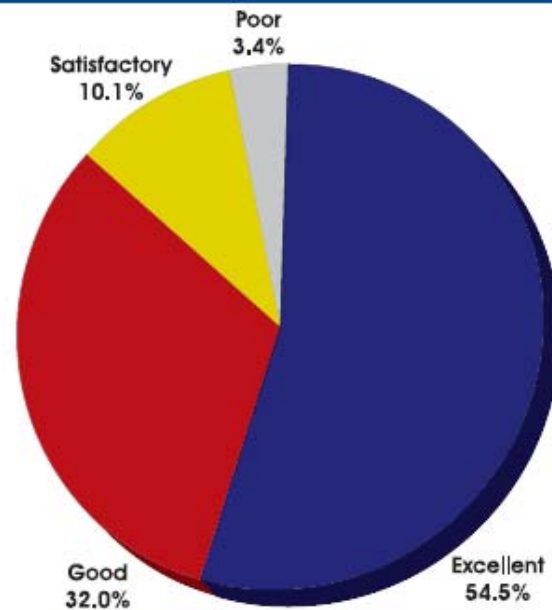


Responses	Number Who Responded
Very Involved	1,165
Somewhat Involved	360
Not Involved at All	47

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis, FY 2006-2007.



How would you rate the overall quality of the Vocational Rehabilitation program?



Responses	Number Who Responded
Excellent	860
Good	506
Satisfactory	160
Poor	53

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis, FY 2006-2007.

